

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT LOUIS 0371

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV PINT PBOR PEPR SOCI EAGR ELTN MP SE
SUBJECT: MAURITIUS WEEKLY REVIEW - MARCH 24 - SUMMARY

REF: PORT LOUIS 0339 (DTG 171019Z MAR 78)
PORT LOUIS A-24,MARCH 24, 1978

1. ON MARCH 23 DAYENDRANATH BURRENCHOBAY WAS SWORN IN AS THE NEW ACTING GOVERNOR GENERAL, REPLACING CHEIF JUSTICE GARRIOCH, WHO WISHED TO RETURN TO HIS JUDICIAL FUNCTIONS. BURRENCHOBAY WAS HEAD OF THE CIVIL SERVICE AND SECRETARY TOTHE CABINET, AS WELL AS PRIME MINISTER RAMGOOLAM'S CLOSEST POLITICAL ADVISER. THE BURRENCHOBAY APPOINTMENT HAS BEEN POPULARLY ACCLAIMED, AS HE IS WELL REGARDED IN ALL QUARTERS FOR HIS EFFICIENCY, INTEGRITY, FAIRNESS AND SIMPLICITY. IT IS AN INTERIM APPOINTMENT, TO KEEP THE CHAIR WARM UNTIL RAMGOOLAM DECIDES EITHER TO OCCUPY IT
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HIMSELF, TO FIND A PERMANENT REPLACEMENT, OR TO HOLD A REFERENDUM ON A REPUBLIC.

2. RAMGOOLAM WAS FORCED TO DELAY THE RESUPMTION OF LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY SITTINGS FOR A WEEK BECAUSE OF THE NEED TO WORK OUT A MODUS VIVENDI WITH THE BOODHOO GROUP OF YOUND LABOR PARTY DISSIDENT DEPUTIES. AFTER SEVEN MEETINGS LASTING 20 HOURS OF

THE PARTY "WORKING COMMITTEE" CONSIDERING THEIR DEMANDS, THE DISSIDENT GROUP ANNOUNCED THAT 14 OF THE 18 POINTS AT ISSUE HAD BEEN RESOLVED IN THEIR FAVOR, BUT THEIR MORE DIFFICULT PROPOSALS HAVE BEEN TURNED OVER TO SUB-COMMITTEES FOR FURTHER STUDY. THEY DID NOT WIN SATISFACTION ON THEIR DEMANDS THAT THE CABINET BE REDUCED TO 11 PORTFOLIOS, THAT "BEST LOSER" DEPUTIES BE BARRED FROM THE CABINET, THAT SOME CONTROVERSIAL DIPLOMATIC APPOINTMENTS BE REVOKED, AND THAT SOME OF RAM'S CRONIES HEADING PARASTATAL BODIES BE FORCIBLY RETIRED. THE "YOUNG TURKS" PROMISED TO REMAIN VIGILANT AND TO OPPOSE IN THE ASSEMBLY ANY UNPOPULAR MEASURES WHICH GO CONTRARY TO THE INTERESTS OF "THE PEOPLE" AND OF THE LABOR PARTY, TO WHICH THEY REMAIN LOYAL. IT WOULD APPEAR THAT RAMGOOLAM HAS NOT YET BROUGHT THE DISSIDENTS UNDER CONTROL, AND THERE WILL BE FURTHER DIFFICULTY FOR HIM FROM THAT QUARTER.

3. MAURITIAN SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY (PMSD) LEADER GAETAN DUVAL VOICED STRONG PUBLIC CRITICISM OF THE GOVERNMENT FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE HE AGREED TO FORM A COALITION WITH LABOR. HE SPOKE OF "IMMOBILISM AND INDECISION," A LACK OF A SENSE OF PRIORITIES, AND HE WAS PARTICULARLY CRITICAL OF WHAT HE CONSIDERS RAMGOOLAM'S FLIRTATION WITH THE MAURITIAN MILITANT MOVEMENT (MMM) TOWARD A POSSIBLE NEW COALITION, WHICH DUVAL THINKS IS ADVERSELY AFFECTING THE CONFIDENCE OF POTENTIAL FOREIGN INVESTORS.

4. ON MARCH 19 A MMM ASSEMBLY ELECTED 15 OF THE 35 MEMBERS OF THE NEW PARTY CENTRAL COMMITTEE. PAUL BERENGER LED THE LIST OF
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WINNERS, WHICH INCLUDED OTHER PARTY OFFICERS SUCH AS JUGNAUTH, BHAYAT, JUDDOO AND COONJAN. THIS GROUP WAS STRENGTHENED IN THEIR HOLD OVER THE PARTY BECAUSE SEVEN FORMER MEMBERS OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE IDENTIFIED WITH THE PARTY'S RADICAL "LEFT WING" DECLINED TO RUN FOR SEATS ON THE GOVERNING BODY. BUT THEIR BOYCOTT MAY CAUSE TROUBLE FOR BERENGER AND COMPANY IN THE FUTURE, ESPECIALLY IF HE TRIES TO FORM A COALITION WITH LABOR, AN IDEA STRONGLY OPPOSED BY THE RADICALS. THE MMM SPONSORED A DEMONSTRATION TO PROTEST THE FAILURE OF MAURITIAN RADIO AND TV TO GRANT THEM TIME EQUAL TO WHAT IS GIVEN THE GOVERNMENT. THE PARTY ALSO LED THE FIGHT AGAINST IMPLEMENTATION OF A REPORT SUBMITTED BY A GOVERNMENT COMMISSION WHICH RECOMMENDED DRASTIC INCREASES IN BUS FARES, WHICH HAS BEEN RECEIVED WITH SUCH HOSTILITY THAT EVEN THE GOVERNMENT IS TAKING ITS DISTANCE FROM THE REPORT.

5. THE GOM IS PREPARING A PROTEST TO THE SEYCHELLES GOVERNMENT AFTER THE LATTER PUBLISHED A MAP PURPORTING TO CLAIM HALF OF THE SAYA DE MALHA FISHING GROUNDS AS PART OF THE SEYCHELLES' "CONTINENTAL SHELF."

6. TWO OF THE ISLAND'S 21 SUGAR FACTORIES HAVE ASKED

PERMISSION TO CEASE OPERATIONS AS THEY ARE UNECONOMIC.
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